

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12
NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 SP-02 ICA-11 TRSE-00 DODE-00
NSC-05 HA-05 BIB-01 IO-13 /096 W
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P R 101436Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4525
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 21671

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, CSCE, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH OBJECTIONS TO CIRCULATION OF NATO
CSCE DOCUMENT

REF: USNATO 6724

1. SUMMARY: IN GENERAL, WE BELIEVE THE BEST WAY TO DEAL
WITH "THE FRENCH PROBLEM" IN NATO IS TO AVOID CONFRONTA-
TIONS OVER PRINCIPLES, TO STEP AROUND FRENCH OBSTACLES
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AS BEST WE CAN, AND TO FOCUS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.
CSCE CONSULTATIONS ARE A PARTICULARLY DISADVANTAGEOUS
ISSUE ON WHICH TO CONFRONT THE FRENCH, FIRST BECAUSE IT
INVOLVES THREE KEY PRINCIPLES FOR THE FRENCH; SECOND
BECAUSE THE BASES FOR OUR OWN ARGUMENTS ARE NOT THAT
STRONG; AND THIRD BECAUSE THE RESULT OF THE DEBATE WILL
NOT MAKE THAT BIG A DIFFERENCE, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. END

SUMMARY.

2. WE HAVE HESITATED TO COMMENT ON RECENT FRENCH-NATO PROBLEMS BECAUSE WE DID NOT WISH TO BE ACCUSED OF LOCALITIS. WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRONG SYSTEM OF NATO CONSULTATIONS, AND OF THE SLOW WEAKENING OF SUCH CONSULTATIONS WHICH COULD BE THE RESULT, OVER TIME, OF FRENCH SNIPING ON POINTS WHICH, TAKEN BY THEMSELVES, MAY NOT SEEM OVERWHELMINGLY IMPORTANT. WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THE OTHER ALLIES LOOK TO US TO RESIST THE FRENCH. WITH THESE HESITATIONS IN MIND, THE FOLLOWING CONSTITUTES OUR COMMENTS ON THE PROBLEMS DESCRIBED IN THE REFTEL.

3. THE GISCARD GOVERNMENT IS THE MOST COOPERATIVE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION WE HAVE SEEN SINCE BEFORE DE GAULLE, BILATERALLY AND WITHIN NATO. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE EQUATION WHICH SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED. AT THE SAME TIME GAULLISM HAS LEFT A POLITICAL HERITAGE IN FRANCE WHICH NO FRENCH POLITICIAN CAN IGNORE, AND WHEN CERTAIN ISSUES OF PRINCIPLE ARE POSED, EVEN GISCARD'S GOVERNMENT MUST ASSERT FRANCE'S OWN VIEW. SUCH PRINCIPLES CAN BE POSED IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, NORMALLY THROUGH DISCUSSION OF "PROCEDURES," OR WHEN AN ISSUE IS RAISED TO THAT LEVEL OF PUBLIC VISIBILITY WHICH MAKES IT POLITICAL. ISSUES OF PRINCIPLE
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WERE RAISED FOR THE FRENCH DURING THE "PROCEDURAL" DISCUSSIONS LEADING UP TO THE NATO SUMMIT; CSCE HAS BECOME HIGHLY POLITICAL.

4. IN VIEW OF GISCARD'S INCLINATION TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE, BOTH WITH US AND IN NATO, WE BELIEVE WE OWE IT TO HIM, AND TO OURSELVES, TO AVOID AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE EXPOSING HIM TO THE CRITICISM OF HIS GAULLIST ADVERSARIES. CONFRONTATION OVER PRINCIPLES WILL ONLY FORCE THE FRENCH TO TAKE A MORE INTRANSIGENT POSITION. THE FRENCH WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE PROBLEMS FROM TIME TO TIME IN NATO, BUT WE SHOULD NOT PROVOKE THEM OURSELVES, AND SHOULD STEP AROUND THEM, CRAB-LIKE, WHENEVER WE CAN. WE WOULD AGREE WITH USNATO THAT THERE MAY BE TIMES WHEN WE HAVE TO CONFRONT THE FRENCH OVER NATO CONSULTATIONS, BUT WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD AVOID THEM WHEN IT IS POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES WITHOUT THEM AND THAT WE SHOULD CHOOSE THE ISSUES FOR CONFRONTATION CAREFULLY.

5. THE PRESENT ISSUE -- NATO CONSULTATIONS ON CSCE -- IS IN ANY CASE NOT ONE FOR SUCH CONFRONTATION. FIRSTLY,

IT INVOLVES FOR THE FRENCH THREE IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 21671

-- THAT NATO DOES NOT HAVE A COORDINATING ROLE ON
EVERY ASPECT OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS (E.G., CULTURE) AND
IS PRIMARILY A FORUM FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND INFORMA-
TION ON SUCH MATTERS;

-- THAT IT HAS BEEN AGREED (IN THE FINAL ACT) THAT
THE CSCE SHOULD TAKE PLACE OUTSIDE THE MILITARY BLOCS,
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AND THEREFORE IT IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR NATO TO HAVE A PROMINENT PLACE IN THE COORDINATION OF WESTERN POLICIES;

-- THAT THE EC-NINE, RATHER THAN NATO, SHOULD TAKE A LEADING ROLE IN THE CSCE, WITH CLOSELY COORDINATED AND, IF POSSIBLE, JOINT POSITIONS.

6. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FAULT THESE PRINCIPLES. WE HAVE NEVER SOUGHT LOCK-STEP COORDINATION IN NATO ON ALL ASPECTS OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS, AND THE CSCE INVOLVES VIRTUALLY ALL ASPECTS. WE HAVE AGREED IN THE FINAL ACT, AND IN OUR OVERALL APPROACH TO CSCE, THAT IT IS NOT A BLOC-TO-BLOC NEGOTIATION (FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE NEVER SOUGHT THE KIND OF SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE NATO COUNCIL AND THE AD HOC GROUP AT MBFR IN VIENNA). AND WE OURSELVES SUPPORT THE OBJECTIVE OF A POLITICALLY UNIFIED EC-NINE; IF THIS SUPPORT IS TO BE MEANINGFUL, WE SHOULD CONSCIOUSLY TRY TO IDENTIFY ISSUES IN WHICH OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE SUFFICIENTLY BROAD FOR US TO STAND BACK A BIT AND PERMIT THE EC-NINE A LEADING, UNIFIED ROLE. MOREOVER, THE BASES FOR OUR ARGUMENTS ON THIS PARTICULAR PROBLEM ARE WEAK. THE TRADITIONAL PREROGATIVES OF NATO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN ARE IMPORTANT TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ORGANIZATION, BUT THEY CANNOT OVERRIDE THE VIEWS OF A SOVEREIGN MEMBER NATION. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, EVERYTHING IN NATO IS BASED ON CONSENSUS, AND IF ONE MEMBER OBJECTS, WHETHER ON SUBSTANCE OR PROCEDURE, ANOTHER WAY MUST BE FOUND. IN ADDITION, THE FRENCH ARGUMENT THAT USE OF THE PHRASE "MOST DELEGATIONS" IN A COMMITTEE DECISION SHEET IMPLIES RECOGNITION OF MAJORITY RULE APPEARS TO US TO BE CORRECT.

7. FINALLY, THE OUTCOME ON THIS ISSUE DOES NOT APPEAR
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TO US AS LIKELY TO MAKE A VERY BIG DIFFERENCE, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. EXCEPT FOR THOSE WHICH WERE PREPARED ON THE EVE OF NEGOTIATIONS, WITH A SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN MIND, NATO PAPERS ON CSCE HAVE NOT HAD MUCH LASTING SIGNIFICANCE. THE CONSULTATIONS HAVE, OF COURSE, BEEN INDISPENSABLE BECAUSE THEY KEPT ALL THE ALLIES ON THE SAME TRACK, AND THE NEGOTIATING PAPERS HAVE AT TIMES BEEN HIGHLY USEFUL. BUT WE BELIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHIN THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY THE FRENCH, AND WE ALSO SUSPECT THAT THE FRENCH WILL GROW MORE FLEXIBLE AS THE MADRID MEETING APPROACHES.

8. IN VIEW OF THE OTHER ALLIES' NEED TO SEE US RESIST-
ING THE FRENCH WITHIN NATO ON THESE MATTERS, IT IS
PROBABLY JUST AS WELL FOR OTHER EUROPEAN MEMBERS TO
COME UP WITH COMPROMISE SOLUTIONS WHEN FRENCH PROBLEMS
ARE POSED. WE ADMIRE THE SOLUTION FOR THE PRESENT BIND
SUGGESTED BY THE FRG AND DANISH PERMREPS (PARA 8, REFTTEL)
WHICH IS IN THE BEST CRAB-WALKING TRADITION OF MANLIO
BROSIO AND ANDRE DE STAERCKE. WE WOULD RECOMMEND SUCH
ELEGANT DANCE-STEPS AS THESE WHENEVER TINE TRIES TO
TRIP US AGAIN.
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